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By *ST/RSW* Date *3/9/98*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 9, 2005

May 25, 1971

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Attention: Mr. H. H. H.
Keep this study together.

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Contingency Study for Indo-Pakistan
Hostilities

There is attached a draft contingency paper on the prospects for Indo-Pakistan hostilities. I would appreciate your distributing this paper to members of the Washington Special Action Group for consideration at its meeting on Wednesday May 26.

Theodore L. Eliot Jr.

Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.
Executive Secretary

Attachment:

Contingency Study for
Indo-Pakistani Hostilities

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3/8/81 CMS

Clearances: NEA - Mr. Biscoe
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CONTINGENCY STUDY FOR INDO-PAKISTANI HOSTILITIES

I. Introduction

The civil war in East Pakistan has now continued for two months. The Pakistan Army has advanced to the Indian borders and has control over all of the major population centers in East Pakistan. Despite this apparent military success, the prospects for political and military stability are poor and the danger that the situation will escalate into an international conflict is growing. Thus the situation is moving from a level at which our interests were only secondarily involved to one that could pose a direct threat to the bases of U. S. policy in South Asia. This paper assesses the contingencies under which an escalation might take place and suggests steps which the US should take either to prevent escalation or to terminate it once war has broken out.

II. Danger Signals

In the last ten days we have received clandestine reports of military movements by Indian forces near the East and West Pakistan borders, and signs of Indian contingency planning for war. The Indian Government has reinforced Border Security Force (BSF) units and has moved regular Indian Army units to within three kilometers of the border. Tanks have been seen moving to forward cantonments in the Punjab. These developments reflect the growing Indian concern at the flood of Hindu refugees pouring out of East Pakistan at a rate in excess of 100,000 per day. Over 3.4 million have crossed into India. The Indian Government faces strong public and Parliamentary pressure to stop the refugee inflow and to support the Bengalis. The GOI fears that if there is not a cessation of the refugee

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flow, the states of Eastern India could be inundated under as many as 8 million refugees. In Indian eyes this would pose an intolerable burden on the social and economic structure of the area.

In addition to its concern about the refugee problem, the GOI has been taking steps to support the Bengali struggle for independence in the face of the military successes of the Pakistan Army. The BSF has established camps at which 10,000 Bengalis are reportedly receiving training in guerrilla and sabotage tactics. Limited quantities of arms and ammunition continue to be provided to the Bengali separatists and some Indian forces have infiltrated into East Bengal to provide assistance and training to the separatists. There have been several border incidents involving Indian and Pakistani border units and at least one violation of Indian air space by Pakistani aircraft.

While India probably still does not seek a war with Pakistan, it may come to believe that its national interest requires a preemptive strike against Pakistan. The Pakistanis, for their part, probably believe that it is only Indian political and military support that will keep the insurgency alive. They may therefore decide to strike directly against guerrilla training camps within India in order to relieve the pressure. Over the longer term there is also the danger that the Pakistanis will provoke a conflict in order to distract international attention from the internal situation in East Pakistan and in order to convince the East Pakistani people that there is a threat from India sufficiently great to justify the continued unity of Pakistan and the West Pakistani military presence in the East.

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There are still strong negative factors working against escalation. Both Governments, with the experience of 1965 in mind, are aware that a decisive victory cannot be won and the costs of war are extremely high. On the Indian side, there is added a fear of China and the recognition that an Indo-Pakistani conflict could result in direct Chinese involvement. Given the highly emotional context in which decisions are being made in India and Pakistan, however, one cannot assume that rational arguments militating against escalation will overrule the more immediate needs to respond to specific incidents or provocations.

III. Scenarios for Escalation

There are a variety of circumstances in which escalation might take place:

(1) The Indians, faced with something approaching genocide of the Hindus in East Pakistan and inundated with an unmanageable Hindu refugee inflow, might decide to move in to stop the killing, end this refugee flow and establish a moderate Awami League Government in Dacca.

(2) The Pakistanis might take action against BSF guerrilla/^{training} camps in India or might fire upon Indian border units while pursuing retreating Bengali separatist infiltrators.

(3) Other types of border incidents might in themselves provoke escalation. For example, the Indians might shoot down a Pakistani aircraft violating Indian air space.

(4) The Pakistanis might engage in a diversionary maneuver in Kashmir to distract Indian and world attention from the Bengal situation. In extremis

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the Pakistanis might attack India in the Punjab.

(5) The GOI in the Parliamentary session beginning May 24 will come under increased pressure to recognize the Bangla Desh Government. Should it do so, a break in relations with Islamabad would probably result. An Indian decision to recognize Bangla Desh would also probably be followed by more overt Indian support for the separatists, which in turn would increase the likelihood of an open conflict.

Of these scenarios the one most likely to lead to escalation at this time is the one deriving from the refugee problem and its impact in India. However, if an effective insurgency gains momentum as a result of Indian involvement, the Pakistanis also will come under increasing pressure to take action against India. In both cases, as long as there is no fundamental solution to the underlying political problem, the danger of war will remain.

IV. Secondary Escalation

Escalation would in the first instance involve only a direct confrontation between India and Pakistan. However, we have learned from intelligence sources that China may have given a conditional promise to assist Pakistan in the event hostilities break out with India. The Chinese may have also given assurances that they will initiate military action "along the Tibetan border" if Indian troops deliberately cross the Pakistani frontier in force. Should the Chinese become directly involved, it is likely that the Soviet Union will openly support India and will presumably provide such military assistance as is required.

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V. Steps to Prevent Escalation

Although US influence in India and Pakistan is limited in the present circumstances, there are various actions which we might take to promote our interest in preventing the crisis from escalating. As indicated above, the dangers of escalation will remain as long as there is no resolution of the basic political issues in East Pakistan. If a peaceful accommodation between the East and West can be achieved resting on genuine popular support in East Pakistan, there is little doubt that the refugee flow would stop and that India would accept the political accommodation and back away from its support for any residual Bengali separatist movement. In view of the bloodshed of recent weeks, a political accommodation will be extremely difficult to achieve, but it is in our interest to accelerate efforts to achieve it. We might therefore:

-- Continue to stress to the Government of Pakistan the urgent need for political accommodation and indicate that our ability to assist Pakistan depends on progress toward such an accommodation.

-- Consider a more active use of the leverage of our military and economic assistance programs to induce Pakistan to begin political negotiations with the Bengalis. (The merits of this was discussed in the SRG paper reassessing US Relations with Pakistan.)

-- Continue to stress in both Islamabad and New Delhi the importance of restraint and our hope that neither side will over-react to border incidents or provocations. Warn the Indians of the dangers of Chinese intervention in the event of escalation, and tell them that they cannot automatically count on our support in this event.

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-- Continue to emphasize a) to the Indians our willingness to assist them in alleviating the burdens created by the refugee flow, particularly by providing increased US financial assistance, and b) to the Pakistanis the importance of creating conditions in which the refugee flow will stop and be reversed.

-- Emphasize to the Indians the desirability of conducting India's relations with representatives of East Bengal so as to minimize tensions, with Islamabad. As long as the Indians withhold recognition of Bangla Desh, they are less likely to go beyond the modest levels of military support that they are now providing.

-- Consider approaching the Chinese to urge them to continue to exercise restraint in the present situation. It might be possible to persuade the British, the Canadians, or the French to express the need for restraint through their missions in Peking.

-- Confidentially discuss with the USSR the steps which we might take to prevent the outbreak of war.

-- Support and encourage third country offers of assistance as mediators. (The Swiss are already engaged in facilitating the repatriation of Indian and Pakistani diplomats from Calcutta and Dacca.) Additional countries at a later stage might take on a mediatory role. Canada, with good relations in Islamabad, Delhi and Peking, might be encouraged to do so.

-- Consider encouraging the UN Secretary General to adopt a more open political role, going beyond his present efforts to achieve an international relief effort, perhaps including a public appeal for a political settlement or an offer to travel to the area to seek the views of South Asian leaders.

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-- Consider supporting the Indian proposal for a UN Security Council meeting to consider the international security aspects of the refugee problem.

-- Consider using our economic leverage with India to achieve restraint.

VI. Actions in the Event of Escalation

Should the crisis escalate into an open war between India and Pakistan, we will be faced as in 1965 with many difficult decisions. The situation will be significantly more complex than in 1965 since it is possible that the conflict will be joined on both India's eastern and western borders and will involve the Chinese and the Soviets to some degree or other. Except in the unlikely event of a major Chinese attack against India, no US military commitment would be involved. In the event of escalation, we will need to act swiftly to halt the conflict. We should be prepared to take the following actions:

-- Immediately call the United Nations Security Council into session and strongly support any UN action designed to terminate hostilities.

-- Formally and publicly suspend all military programs to India and Pakistan.

-- Immediately send Presidential messages to President Yahya and Prime Minister Gandhi calling for an end to hostilities.

-- Coordinate closely with the USSR and the UK on steps which we might take jointly with the GOP and the GOI.

-- Depending upon the circumstances in which the fighting had broken out, consider suspending our economic assistance to Pakistan and/or India until peace is restored.

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Chinese

-- If there is an unprovoked attack on India in support of Pakistan going beyond border incidents:

(a) consider whether and what kinds of military assistance to India could be resumed.

(b) initiate consultations with the Indians as provided in the 1964 Air Defense Agreement.

-- Withdraw the four C-130s which may be in the area of conflict carrying out a refugee airlift.

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